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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**Vermillion Guard cited for role in Iraq War,
Company B to become known as 730th again**

By Sgt. Stein Larsgaard

VERMILLION, S.D. – Cited for its distinguished service in the Iraq War, Vermillion's National Guard unit will receive the Meritorious Unit Commendation during a transformation ceremony that will be held at 1 p.m. on Sunday, April 6, at the Vermillion National Guard Armory.

The ceremony will also highlight a change in the unit's name Company B, 109th Area Support Medical Battalion – to the 730th Area Support Medical Company. It's all part of the nation-wide transformation of the National Guard into a more integral force in today's Army.

During the ceremony, the Company B colors will be cased and the new 730th colors will be unveiled.

Company B earned the Meritorious Unit Commendation for its role in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Its 69 members served a year in Iraq (2003-04) and distinguished themselves by providing lifesaving medical support during intense combat operations and during the stabilization efforts of the 101st Airborne Division, 1st Armored Division, 82nd Airborne Division, and Multi-National Forces.

The Meritorious Unit Commendation is awarded to units for exceptionally meritorious conduct in performance of outstanding services for at least six continuous months during a period of military operations against an armed enemy. The unit must display such outstanding devotion and superior performance of exceptionally difficult tasks as to set it apart and above other units with similar missions. The degree of achievement required is the same as that which would warrant award of the Legion of Merit to an individual.

"The Meritorious Unit Commendation is more than just recognition of excellence but rather a standard that all future unit members need to uphold," said Sgt. 1st Class Shane Toupal, a recruiter who volunteered to deploy with Company B.

Changing its name from Company B to the 730th has some nostalgic and historical value to some of its long-standing members. During Desert Storm, the unit deployed as the 730th Medical Clearing Company.

"When they were talking about changes with the unit, we suggested the 730th again, not knowing if it could go through," said Staff Sgt. Penny Dickes, unit administrator. "It is good feeling. I still have my old 730th T-shirts!"

The 730th mission remains the same - to provide emergency and routine medical care, and evacuation. The unit is comprised of doctors, dentists and dental assistants, physician assistants, lab personnel, x-ray technicians, and medics along with various support personnel such as mechanics and cooks.

"This transition to the 730th ASMC is a fitting tribute to current and past members," added Maj. Chris Storms, commander. "The 730th ASMC will continue to provide medical support to South Dakota as well as when called upon in times of national need."

Since the terrorist attacks on America, the South Dakota National Guard has mobilized more than 3,100 Soldiers and 730 Airmen in support of the Global War on Terror.

Currently, more than 230 Soldiers and Airmen from the South Dakota National Guard remain on duty in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other locations throughout Southwest Asia. More than 4,000 National Guardsmen are available in South Dakota to provide support for state and national emergencies and homeland defense.

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